

directions and is such as to be engaged by a corner of the mail item (M) where the mail item (M) is inserted in the first direction, the second direction and any direction intermediate thereto.

In Salomon, where the left-hand side (as illustrated) of the projection (19b) on the arm (19) were considered to define a face which is inclined to first and second mutually perpendicular directions as defined by the registration walls (11, 13), this face is not such as to be engaged by a corner of a mail item (M) where the mail item (M) is inserted in all directions as defined by the registration walls (11, 13). Notably, where the first registration wall (11) defines one of the first and second directions, a corner of a mail item (M) would manifestly not engage the face at the left-hand side of the projection (19b) on the arm (19) on insertion of the mail item (M) in that one direction along the first registration wall (11).

Thus, the invention as defined in new claim 12 is clearly distinguished over the disclosures of Salomon.

In this connection, it should be noted that the embodiment of Figure 5 to which the Examiner has referred is expressly stated as exhibiting a number of problems (see column 4, lines 1 to 3), in particular in requiring contact with corners of mail items (M), since such corners could be bent or broken (see column 3, lines 53 to 55). The teaching of Salomon, contrary to the presently-claimed invention, is directed to an apparatus and method which requires the detection of first and second edges of a mail item (see column 2, lines 1 to 6), and, in this regard, discloses the embodiments of Figures 6 to 10. As such, when considering the disclosures of Salomon, a person skilled in the art would manifestly not have contemplated utilizing the embodiment of Figure 5 as the basis of any improved apparatus or method, as that embodiment relies upon the detection of a corner of a mail item and not first and second edges of a mail item.

New claim 23 defines that the face of the sensor unit is inclined at approximately 45 degrees to the first and second directions. Such a sensor unit is not disclosed or suggested in Salomon. In Salomon, the face at the left-hand side of the projection (19b) on the arm (19) extends in a direction substantially perpendicular to

the second registration wall (13).

With regard to new claims 13 to 23, these claims are dependent upon an allowable claim, new claim 12, and thus are allowable on that basis, as well as for the additional limitations they add to claim 12..

New claim 24 requires *inter alia* that the face of the sensor unit is normally located to extend between adjacent ends of the first and second guides across a corner of the predetermined location. Such a sensor unit is not disclosed or suggested in Salomon. In Salomon, the projection (19b) on the arm (19) extends into a space between the ends of the first and second registration walls (11, 13), but manifestly does not extend between the ends of the first and second registration walls (11, 13).

New claim 25 recites *inter alia* that the mail location apparatus includes a support platform for supporting a mail item located in the predetermined location and a reference wall for referencing the mail item located in the predetermined location, and that the face of the sensor unit extends at least beyond the support platform and the reference wall. Such a sensor unit is not disclosed or suggested in Salomon.

Thus, the invention as defined in new claims 24 and 25 is also clearly distinguished over the disclosures of Salomon.



Charles W. Fallow

Reg. No. 28,946

Shoemaker and Mattare, Ltd.
2001 Jefferson Davis Highway
Arlington, Virginia 22202
(703) 415-0810

June 26, 2002

July
12. Mail location apparatus operative to locate a mail item inserted thereinto at a predetermined location in first and second mutually perpendicular directions, including:

Q1
a first guide for engagement by a first edge of the mail item;

a second guide for engagement by a second edge of the mail item, the second edge being adjacent to and adjoining the first edge at a corner of the mail item; and

a sensor unit operative in response to the mail item being located in the predetermined location with the first edge engaging the first guide and the second edge engaging the second guide, the sensor unit including a face engageable by the mail item, which face is inclined to both the first and second directions such as to be engaged by the corner of the mail item where the mail item is inserted in the first direction, the second direction and any direction intermediate thereto.

13. Mail location apparatus as claimed in claim 12, wherein the first guide comprises a first guide wall extending lengthwise in the first direction, the second guide comprises a second guide wall extending lengthwise in the second direction, and the first and second guide walls define the predetermined location.

14. Mail location apparatus as claimed in claim 13, wherein adjacent ends of the first and second guide walls are spaced apart and the face of the sensor unit normally is located to extend between the adjacent ends of the first and second guide walls across a corner of the predetermined location.

15. Mail location apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein the sensor unit is responsive to displacement of the face thereof out of the predetermined location.

16. Mail location apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein the sensor unit includes an element defining the face engageable by the corner of the mail item, the element being displaceable in a direction inclined to both the first guide wall and the second guide wall by insertion of the mail item into the predetermined location.

17. Mail location apparatus as claimed in claim 16, wherein the element is mounted on a pivot.

18. Mail location apparatus as claimed in claim 16, wherein the sensor unit includes a resilient member operative to urge the element to a location in which the face thereof extends across the corner of the predetermined location.

19. Mail location apparatus as claimed in claim 16, wherein the sensor unit includes a detector responsive to displacement of the element to a position in which the face thereof does not extend across the corner of the predetermined location.

20. Mail location apparatus as claimed in claim 12, further comprising:

a support platform for supporting the mail item located in the predetermined location; and

a reference wall for referencing the mail item located in the predetermined location;

wherein the face of the sensor unit extends at least beyond the support platform and the reference wall.

21. Mail location apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein the first and second guide walls extend from the reference wall, and the support platform is displaceable between an open position in which the mail item can be inserted into the predetermined location between the reference wall and the support platform and a closed position in which the mail item located in the predetermined location is held by the reference wall and the support platform.

22. Mail location apparatus as claimed in claim 21 in combination with a print head, wherein the reference wall has an aperture therein, and the print head is selectively operable to print a postal indicium through the aperture in the reference wall onto the mail item located in the predetermined location.

23. Mail location apparatus as claimed in claim 12, wherein the face of the sensor unit is inclined at approximately 45 degrees to the first and second directions.

24. Mail location apparatus operative to locate a mail item at a predetermined location in first and second mutually perpendicular directions, including:
a first guide for engagement by a first edge of the mail item;
a second guide for engagement by a second edge of the mail item, the second edge being adjacent to and adjoining the first edge at a corner of the mail item; and
a sensor unit operative in response to the mail item being located in the predetermined location with the first edge engaging the first guide and the second edge engaging the second guide, the sensor unit including a face inclined to both the first and second directions and engageable by the corner of the mail item, the face being normally located to extend between adjacent ends of the first and second guides across a corner of the predetermined location.

25. Mail location apparatus operative to locate a mail item at a predetermined location in first and second mutually perpendicular directions, including:

a support platform for supporting the mail item located in the predetermined location; and

a reference wall for referencing the mail item located in the predetermined location;

a first guide for engagement by a first edge of the mail item;

a second guide for engagement by a second edge of the mail item, the second edge being adjacent to and adjoining the first edge at a corner of the mail item; and

a sensor unit including a face engageable by the mail item, wherein the sensor unit is operative in response to the mail item being located in the predetermined location with the first edge engaging the first guide and the second edge engaging the second guide, the face of the sensor unit being inclined to both the first and second directions such as to be engaged by the corner of the mail item, and extending at least beyond the support platform and the reference wall.